Firemen's Insurance Company Building 303 Seventh Street, N.W. Washington District of Columbia HABS No. DC-235

HABS DC WASH 192-

PHOTOGRAPHS
Withen Historical and Descriptive Doctor

ACTOR AND

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

I.STATE District of Columbia

COUNTY

TOWN Washington VICINITY

STREET NO. 303 Seventh Street, N.W.

ORIGINAL OWNER Firemen's Insurance Co.
ORIGINAL USE Office building
PRESENT OWNER' Firemen's Insurance Company
PRESENT USE Office Building
WALL CONSTRUCTION Brick, wall bearing
NO. OF STORIES Five

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
INVENTORY HAPS DL-235

<sup>2</sup> NAME Firemen's Insurance Company Building

OATE OR PERIOD Before 1887 STYLE ARCHITECT BUILDER

3. FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USE

HABS, DC, WASH, 192-

4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION

OPEN TO PUBLIC

This brick office building of picturesque massing and character reflects the interest of the 1880's in complex skylines and small-scale ornamental detail. It occupies an irregular lot at one corner of a triangular block and is five stories high plus a mansard roof. The frontage on Seventh Street is 60 feet, and Indiana Avenue, 35 feet.

An octagonal tower, once covered with a dome, is located on the corner and a canted bay at the other end of the south facade recalls its form. The west facade is asymmetrical in composition and fenestration.

Adjoining this building to the east is a small contemporary one of similar character, the National Union Insurance Company. It is brick, four stories high and has a number of ornamental details. The two form a coherent group.

5. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE Endangered Probably Interior Good

Exterior Good



6. LOCATION MAP (Plan Optional)

7. PHOTOGRAPH

8. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Author, Title, Pages)
INTERVIEWS, RECORDS, PHOTOS, ETC.

9. NAME, ADDRESS AND TITLE OF RECORDER
Harley J. McKee
Professor Emeritus of Architecture
Syracuse University
August 6, 1969

DATE OF RECORD

\$ 439

Addendum
Fireman's Insurance Company Building
301-305 Seventh Street, NW
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-235

HABS DC, WASH, 192-

#### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey National Park Service Department of the Interior Washington, DC 20013-7127 d States Department of the Interior 192 Conservation and Recreation Service 1950n, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

(Page 1/)

DATE

9/17/81

DC, WASH, 19. STATE COUNTY TOWN OR VICINITY District of Columbia Washington HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) HABS NO. FIREMAN'S INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING DC-235 SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE "Fireman's Insurance Company" COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) 303-307 Seventh Street, N. W., Square 458, Lot 813. DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE). (ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) 1882 - Permit #145, 3/3/1882 R. J. Lauritz (Building Permit) SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) The Fireman's Insurance Company began its operations in 1838 in downtown Washington, and settled at its present address in 1882. The structure exemplifies restrained Queen Anne detailing, lacking the richness and minuteness characteristic of the style. Instead the building uses volumetric complications; which adapt well to the corner site. (see next page) STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)
Queen Anne MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Load-bearing brick perimeter walls; wood-framed floors and roof. SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABL Irregular trapezoid - approximately 100' (Seventh Street), 36' (Indiana Avenue). EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE 3 bays (north) x 2 bays (south); hexagonal tower on southwest corner: Mansard roof on corbelled cornice with brackets. North elevation - projecting pavilion with pediment is framed by pilasters; fenestration in square headed on 1st floor, segmentally-arched on second to fourth, round-arched on fifth; triangular pediment carries INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) All floors - open space with columns; modern finishes on interior; window moldings with flutec architraves and bullseye blocks; small entrance foyer opens to half-turn stair; stair has wooden balustrade, newel posts; passenger elevator along west wall. MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES To remodel interior, put in new brick front, construct show windows - Permit #2, 7/1/1884. To erect show windows, 3' x 9'-6", and to change stairs from north to south side - Permit #228, 8/9/1904. To take up present floor, build one wood partition (rear), (see next page) PRESENT CONDITION AND USE Good - Insurance company office OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE The building lies within the boundaries of the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. It is scheduled for redevelopment as part of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation' Historic Preservation Plan, 1977. SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDE LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) Columbia Historical Society - City Directory Information, Records, National Archives - building permit information. Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King Memorial Library - plat map information.

COMPILER, AFFILIATION Suzanne Frangia - Anderson Notter/Mariani for the Pennsylvania Avenue

Development Corporation

Fireman's Insurance Company Buildir HABS No. DC-235 (Page 2)

FIREMAN'S INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING
"Fireman" Insurance Company"
303-307 Seventh Street, N.W., Square 458, Lot 813
Washington, D. C.

## SIGNIFICANCE (cont'd.)

It is visually enhanced by the Romanesque building to the east.

# EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (cont'd.)

semi-circular opening. South elevation - transomed entrance; corbelled cornice, chimeny. Projecting hexagonal bay similar to S.W. corner tower.

## MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES (cont'd.)

put up counter and side shelves -- Permit #3770, 3/17/1913. To erect signs -- Permit #1596, 9/29/1916; #8039, 6/22/1921; #5834, 1/14/1924.

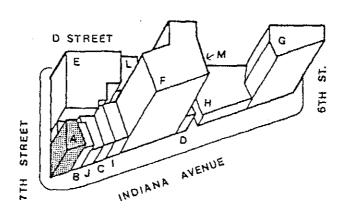


GENERAL CONSULTANTS

ANDERSON HOTTER/MARIANI
GENERAL PRESERVATION & COMSERVATION COMBULTANT
DEVACUAX & PURNELL
ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS
DAVID MCLAREN HART & ASSOCIATES
PRESERVATION & COMSERVATION CONSULTANT
MONK DUNSTONE ASSOCIATES
COST ESTIMATING CONSULTANT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM
BUILDING DOCUMENTATION

Fireman's Insurance Company 301-305 Seventh St., N.W. Lot Part of 823



This documentation was produced for mitigation purposes by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation. Additional documentation exists for Square 458, within which this structure stands. For photographs, historical, and descriptive data on Square 458, see HABS No. DC-618.

#### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

On the southwest corner of Square 458 is the Fireman's Insurance Company building, an 1882 Queen Anne structure. This five-and-a-half story brick building occupies Lot 813, a trapezoidal site at the intersection of Seventh Street and Indiana Avenue. The Seventh Street (west) facade measures nearly 100 feet; the Indiana Avenue (south) facade measures approximately 36 feet. A prominent hexagonal tower with a flat roof stands at the southwest corner of this building and rises slightly above the building's mansard roof. A two-story Twentieth Century addition abutts the 1882 Fireman's building on Seventh Street. On Indiana Avenue a four-story Romanesque commercial building (458-B) shares the party wall.

The first floor level of the Fireman's building and its northern addition on Seventh Street are clad in stacked, green-glazed tile that simulate rustication. The upper stories are brick and have been painted a lighter shade of green. There are two entrances to these buildings; both on the Seventh Street elevation. The main entrance into the 1882 building is immediately north of the corner tower. The second entrance is located in the north annex building.

The interior of the Fireman's Insurance Company building has been modernized and very few of the original features remain, although some window moldings - fluted architraves with bullseye corner blocks - are still in place. The main Seventh Street entrance opens into a small foyer. To the right is a large irregularly shaped room. The office on the left opens up into the north addition. From the foyer, a half-turn staircase rises in an enclosed central well. There is a wooden balustrade, with simple wooden newel posts at each landing. Two small passenger elevators are centrally located along the west wall and provide access from the second through fifth floors. Each stair landing provides access to a north and south office. The office space is open.

#### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Fireman's Insurance Company began its operations in 1837 in downtown Washington and, after several relocations, settled at its present Seventh Street address in 1882. The site which this structure occupies was purchased on March 3, 1882. On July 29, 1882 Building Permit #145 was filed by architect R. J. Lauritz (or Lavritzen). A man named Reed was identified as the builder. The design of this prominently located building responds to the site by using the volumetric complications that are common in the Queen Anne Style. The walls are articulated by pilasters and pediments

enframing the windows. The corner which faces Seventh Street and Indiana Avenue is a full height projecting polygonal bay and was once topped by a gold-leafed dome. The result is a picturesque fragmentation of the building mass into many parts. Unfortunately, the building lacks the fine ornamental richness and minute detailing that are also characteristic of the style.

#### SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

The northern section of the Seventh Street facade is framed by applied pilasters which rest on the building base and extend from the second through the fifth floors to terminate at capitals that support a brick corbeled cornice. A triangular pediment completes the composition. Within this section there are three bays. The first floor windows have been replaced by modern four-light hopper windows. The second through fourth floor one-over-one double-hung windows are set into segmental arches.

At the fifth floor there are two pairs of one-over-one double-hung windows with round-headed arches which flank a single identical window. A semi-circular window is set into the pediment. The southern section is simpler; it is composed to two bays and terminates at the southwest corner in the octagonal corner tower. At the first level there is a modern double glass door with a transom. Immediately south of the entrance is a broad striated metal panel, equal in height to the entrance, upon which the words "Fireman's Insurance Company" are fixed. The second through fourth floor one-over-one double-hung windows are set into segmental arches. This section of the west facade terminates in a simple corbeled cornice. A chimney rises above the cornice line and is flanked by semicircular dormer windows.

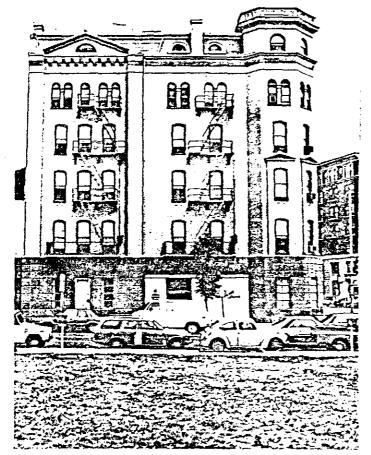
The engaged six-story octagonal tower rises slightly past the ridge of the mansard. A brick roof parapet wraps around the top of the tower and carries the inscription "1837 Fireman's Insurance Company 1882". There are windows on the four exposed sides of the tower. The first floor presents the same glazed rusticated finish as the rest of the building. At this level, the windows are modern aluminum hopper sash with four lites. The second and third floors are treated as a pavilion on each of the tower sides: a projecting plane of brickwork is capped by a triangular pediment whose tympanum features brick laid in sawtooth courses. The third floor windows have checkered spandrel panels. All windows from second to fourth levels are one-over-one double-hung wood sash set into segmental arches. On the fifth floor there are narrow paired round-arched openings with the typical double-hung sash, but with round-arched

Fireman's Insurance Company Building HABS No. DC-235 (Page 6)

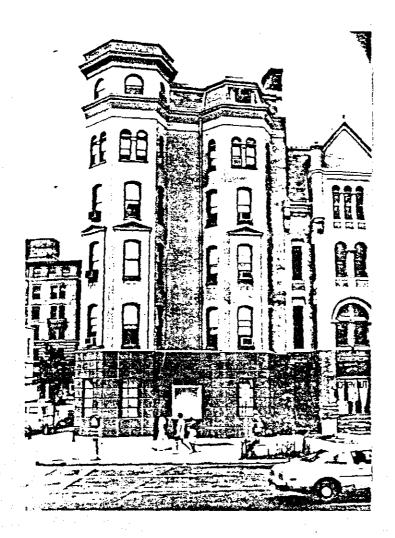
transom lights above. At the sixth floor line the corbeled eave cornice of the main building's mansard wraps around the tower, thus establishing the sixth level of the tower as an attic. A single round-arched window occurs on each side. The top cornice of the tower appears to be metal and projects boldly with classical moldings.

The south elevation has a projecting octagonal bay to the east. Except for the top level, this bay reiterates the tower volume and detailing, thus creating an ambiguous complexity between tower and bay. Between the projecting elements the building wall is blank. The fenestration and the brickwork of the tower are nearly identical to those of the bay. Here, only the south face has the pavilion detail on the second and third floors, and there is only one fifth floor window on the remaining two sides. On the mansard level of the bay, the south face has a shed dormer supported by pilasters.

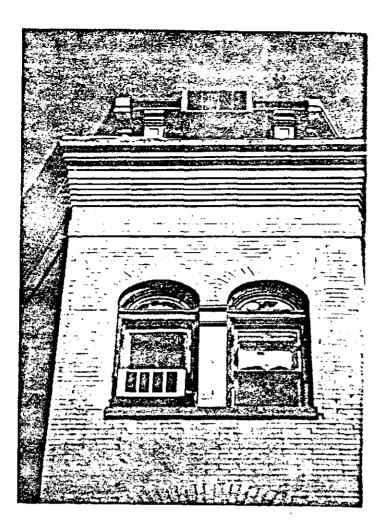
Fireman's Insurance Company Building HABS No. DC-235 (Page X)



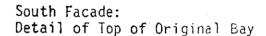
Seventh Street Facade (West)



Indiana Avenue Facade (South)



Fireman's Insurance Company Building HABS No. DC-235 (page 8)



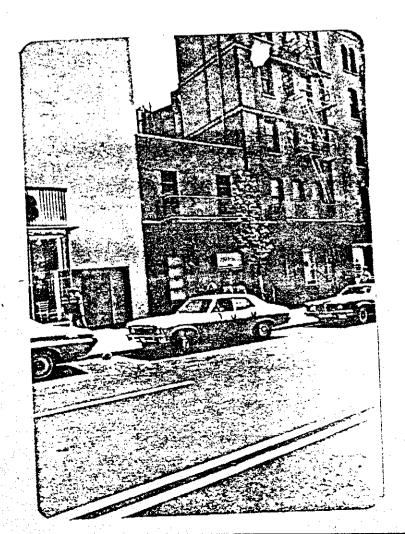


Southwest Corner Detail of Pavilion Pediment on Corner Tower



Fireman's Insurance Company Building HABS No. DC-235 (Page 9)

Detail of Southwest Corner Tower



West Facade: View of Addition at North End

# Lot 6 (Sublot 5, 823) 301-305 Seventh Street

1819.....Lot 6 was assessed to John Housman, Alex Kerr, William A. Bradley and Edmund Rice.

1844.....The lot was assessed to Edward DeKraft at a value of \$2,832.00.

1859.....The Edward DeKraft Estate was assessed at \$7,080.00.

1870

to

1880.....The building housed a variety of tenants including photographers, a druggist, jewelers, a hat and cap store, and a dry goods store.

1872/73...The Edward DeKraft Estate was assessed at \$9,912.00.

1878/79...The property was assessed to Edward DeKraft Estate and to Clayonia W. Barney.

1880

to

1890.....Among the tenants were cigar and tobacco dealers, furniture dealers and a hat and cap store at the 301 and 305 Seventh Street locations.
303 Seventh Street housed a variety of professionals such as lawyers, insurance agents, brokers and a detective.

1882.....A building permit was issued on July 29 to the Firemen's Insurance Company to build a five story brick building with a slate and tin half mansard roof to be used as an office (Permit #145, Architect: R. J. Lauritzen).

1883/84...The building was assessed to the Firemen's Insurance Company for \$9,912.00.

1884

to

1912.....Robert Amias was a tenant of the building. He ran a book store, was a general agent, and also operated an installment house at this location.

1884 to 1891.....Arthur S. Brown, an attorney at law was among the tenants. 1885 to 1895.....Osceola Green, an insurance agent was also among tenants. 1885 to 1895.....Hallock and Halleck, lawyers, were also among the tenants of the building. 1893/94...The Firemen's Insurance Company was assessed at \$13,452.00 for the ground and \$12,000.00 for the improvements. 1909 to 1913.....The City Directory listed Sioussa and Broclett, merchandizing brokers, as occupants of the building. 1916 to 1922..... Howard and Hoffman, an insurance company, was an occupant at this location. 1918 to 1927.....The Naturette Drug Company was located at this lot for nine years. 1928 to 1967.....The Enterprize Serial Building Association was located in the building according to the City Directory. 1981.....The building, is still occupied by the Firemen's Insurance Company.

### Lot 6 (Sublot 6) 307 Seventh Street, N. W.

1792.....David Burnes owned the property (Liber A, Folio 1).

1799.....David Burnes died, and William Whetcroft bought Lot 6.

1809.....Sarah and William Whetcroft inherited Lot 6.

1819.....The property was assessed to Edmund Rice.

1829/33...The lot was assessed to Edmund Rice for \$400.00 and the improvements to the lot were assessed at \$1,800.00.

1844.....The lot was assessed for \$800.00 to Thom Ferrall.

1859.....Douglass Moore was assessed \$6,000.00 for the lot.

1872/73...Douglass Moore's assessment dropped to \$4,800.00.

1883/84...Douglass Moore's assessment rose to \$5,600.00.

1884.....On July 1st Henry Kraak was granted a permit to remodel the interior, to put in a new brick front, and to construct two projecting show windows. Permit #2, Architect: S. R. Turner and Company).

1893/94...The property was assessed at \$6,800.00 in the name of Henry Kraak and the improvements were assessed at \$4,500.00.

1904.....Rose Riley and Henry Kraak were granted a permit on July 15 to cut an opening for a doorway to be located between the premises of 307 and 309 7th Street. The permit states that the present occupant was M. Stern (Permit #102½, Architect: N. R. Grinn).

A permit was issued on August 9 to Henry Kraak to change the stairs located on the north side of the building to the south side of the building (Permit #288, Archiect: W. R. Grinn).

1909

to

1915.....Stenn Meyer, a clothier, is listed in the City Directory as the occupant of the building.

1912

to

1917.....The City Directory lists Carlton Vaughan as the tenant.

1913..... A permit issued on February 17 granted Henry Kraak the authority to take up the present floor and build one partition across the room on the rear. The permit described the building as a three story building with a lunch room on the main level (Permit #3770).

1920

to

1929.....The building housed several dentists during this three year period.

Among these were the acme dentists, Arthur Lehman, Joseph Pessagno, and Robert Bradshaw. Also, the palm readers Henry and Phoebe Younger occupied the building.

1981.....This building is now used as an annex to the Firemen's Insurance Company.

#### **SOURCES**

Baist Real Estate Atlas

Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps

Boyd's City Directories

District of Columbia Building Permits

District of Columbia General Assessment Records

District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds

District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records

District of Columbia Tax Records

Hopkins Real Estate Atlas

Polk's City Directories

Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewl Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency

Sanborn Insurance Map